



Research Article

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An Assessment of Technology as a Contributing Factor to the Development of Democracy in Nigeria: An Opinion Sampling on the Use of Electronic Device in 2015 General Elections

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Abstract: The global wind of technological advancement blowing across the globe seems to be touching all aspects of human live and endeavour. Politics especially democracy is never an exception. The impact of technology in democratic election in Nigeria was first felt and considered to be reliable in the nation`s general elections of April 2015. Conducted with the used of both qualitative and quantitative research methods, this research examined the contribution of technology to the development of Nigeria`s democracy. It also among other objectives assessed the role of technological device in the conduct of national and globally recognized elections in the country in April 2015. The research examined the need for the use of sophisticated technological devices in the nation`s future elections as a precaution against rigging and manipulation of election results. The research found out that the introduction, application and usage of technological device assisted in the credibility and fairness of the April 2015 general elections conducted in Nigeria. And it recommended that the usage of such devices should be adopted in future elections in the country.

Keywords: Technology, Device, Democratic, Electronic and Elections.

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INTRODUCTION

Until recently in Nigeria, the notion that the usage of electronic device can create the opportunity for the conduct of free, fair and credible democratic elections in the country was thwarted by many. Antagonists of the usage of electronic voting system and the application of technological equipment in voting subscribed to the view that the nation`s democracy is still in its infant stage, majority of the nation`s citizens who form the bulk of the country`s voters to them are not literate enough for the usage of such device and power supply which most of the devices required to function effectively are in short supply. Their arguments and positions may hold water tight to some extent. But the stand by protagonists and well-wishers of the usage of such device that complete success is not feasible but should not discourage its adoption and usage in the nation`s elections was vindicated in the nation`s general elections of April 2015. Opposition elements for the first time in the political history of Nigeria now saw reasons why a test of change in a system is necessary. The nation had an election which ushered into power, a government considered as the most legitimate one ever seen in the history of democracy and party politics in Nigeria. In presidential, gubernatorial and parliamentary elections conducted, opposition party defeated ruling political

party in a landslide majority-a development that has never been witnessed in the political history of the country until in April 2015 general elections.

Nigeria had had several general elections before 2015 and all as Diamond (1987) submits were accompanied with one or more forms of disagreements. General elections conducted in 1966 shortly after political independence resulted in political conflicts which Zolberg (1968) believed to have claim the lives of dozens of innocent Nigerian citizens especially in communities situated south-west of the nation. Although, the military in Africa consider its presence in government as a sort of corrective element to politicians` unethical conducts and political misbehaviors. But Finer (1986) wrote that soldiers too misbehave in power than civilians sometimes. Post-election conflicts of 1966, 1983 and 1992 attracted military interventions in government in Nigeria while the ones of 2003, 2007 and 2011 attracted violence leading to the loss of lives and properties. The ones of 1979 and 1999 which ended in military handover of political power to civilian government were also escorted with several grudges and petitions calling for the cancellation of the elections on ground of electoral misconducts such as rigging and manipulations of original results.

The legitimacy of a government as Englebert (2000) asserts lies so much on the credibility of the process that brought in the regime. In the above stated elections in Nigeria, the electorates did not only complain of manipulation of results by incumbent regimes but they also created tensions that paved ways for military interventions in government resulting in what Huntington (1978) described as the need for political order in changing societies. Technology or rather the use of electronic device was not witnessed in any of the elections mentioned above but still large cries of rigging came from the electorates. And in 2015 elections which technology and electronic device was used, few cries were heard from the electorates after results were announced. Election petition tribunal for the first time in Nigeria received minimal cases of complains and calls for the annulment of elections and for the first time, opposition party unseat ruling party in presidential election. The magnitude of transparency demonstrated in the elections because of the use of card reader and data capturing machines used in the exercise left ruling party and incumbent president with no alternative than to accept defeat and congratulate winner. If not for the use of these technology and electronic devices, many believed that that the ruling party and incumbent government would have found it so easy to rigged the elections through manipulation of results.

Nigerians who initially thought that electronic voting system and the use of technological device in voting will not auger well for a backward, infant democracy and illiteracy infected nation like Nigeria were greeted with Joyce and even advocated for the adaptation of the usage of technological measures in future elections as against the age-long analogue methods on seeing the successes recorded in the 2015 general elections. Though the use of data capturing machine and card reader witnessed little disappointments in some few places due to erratic power supply because the solar power producing batteries did not provide adequate energy needed to make the devices functional. In some other places, data capturing machine failed to recognize the finger prints of some voters. These were all taken care within a short while and do not in any way disrupt the conduct of the elections. For a country starting this for the first time since 1960, Nigeria has demonstrated to the rest of Africa and the world that she has embraces what Przeworski *et al.* (2000) considered as democracy and development.

Statement of Problem

Established civilian regimes in Nigeria until 2015 have been associated with minimal legitimacies because of the unfair processes that brought them into power. Transition exercises also terminates in soldiers handing over power to class formed by military elites. Cries of rigging and manipulation of elections results by incumbent regimes are high. Election and post-election

conflicts continue to claim the lives of innocent citizens and properties worth millions of moneys. Insecurity and insurgency occasioned by repeated bombings and attacks of civic institutions and government officials are on the increase. Alteration of initial electoral time table signifying attempts by incumbent regime`s intension to hold tight to political power create more tension and over heat the polity. The desire for power shift from south to north is high. Fear of rigging and manipulation exist. The polity became dominated with alleged call for military takeover of government. Nigeria`s unity and continued existence as a single united nation became unstable. And the introduction of technological device such as card reader and data capturing machine was conceived as attempts to rigged election in favor of the ruling party-fear that later turned out to be blessing to the nation`s democracy and sustainable unity as a single political entity.

However, it is obvious that several studies have been conducted on Nigeria`s attempt at entrenching durable democracy using free and fair elections. Studies by Kindleberger (2000), Eaglebert (2000), Aderinwale & Olumide (2010) among others have categorically analyzed election matters and governance in Nigeria with special attention to election conduct in the country. Technological advancement in the country has not resulted in the use of electronic devices like card reader and permanent voters card (PVC) then. Therefore, these studies do not consider the contribution of technology in the conduct of elections held in the country before 2015. Previous studies have adopted the use of qualitative method of analysis without taking the views of electorates into consideration in arriving at findings and policy suggestions given. These lapses on the part of previous studies have created a number of gaps in knowledge. It is the desire to bridge up these identified research gaps that justified the basis of this study.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the study are to:

- Assess the contribution of technology to the development of democracy in Nigeria`s general elections of April 2015.
- Examine the importance of the usage of card reader and data capturing machine in Nigeria`s general elections of April 2015.
- Find out the need for the use of technology and electronic devices in future elections in Nigeria.

Research Question

This research raised the following questions:

1. Does technology contribute to the development of democracy in Nigeria`s general elections of April 2015?
2. Were card reader and data capturing machine important in the April 2015 general elections in Nigeria?

3. Is there need to use technology and electronic devices in future elections in Nigeria?

LITERATURE REVIEW

The ecstasy of technology as an instrument that contribute to the acceleration of growth in human society was first perceived in Nigeria with the introduction of internet services and mobile communication networks. Second appreciation in this direction came in the nation's general elections of April 2015. The introduction and usage of electronic devices such as card reader and data capturing machines first in the political history of Nigeria does not only make voting easier and faster. These initiatives minimized the level of rigging and other election related malpractices which characterized previous elections conducted in Nigeria. Allegations that casualties both in deaths and destruction of properties would have been recorded in the early periods of the post April 2015 general elections if opposition party has not defeated the ruling political party. If electronic devices were not used, many believed that the ruling political party would have rigged the elections in its favour a development that would have resulted in the repetition of the 2011 general elections in which both lives and properties were wasted. Post-election conflicts as Chabal (1992) narrates are common experiences in Nigeria and other African states.

Democracy as Appadurai (1974) and Laski (1986) posits embraces development. Technological advancement is a stage in the development of human society. Though power and money as Kindleberger (2000) asserts are greatly connected that their possessors will never for any reason want to lose them. Members of single political party since transition to civil rule ended in Nigeria in May 1999 has continued to rotate political power among themselves until April 2015 general elections swept them out of power. Allegations of consistently rigging and manipulation of results in order to remain in power for long were high in Nigeria until the April 2015 general elections which many believe could not easily be manipulated because of awareness created among the Nigerian people by technological breakthrough especially in relations to social media and other internet services. Before the final results were announced, several citizens following the development already had the results with them. These they were able to collect through social media and other internet networks. And as such, the chances for manipulation were relatively difficult.

In addition to the fact that technology made it possible for ordinary citizens to follow the collation process and what became the final results to be announced, others subscribed to the view that the introduction of card reader and data capturing machines also made it difficult for unregistered voters to vote as in previous elections where cases of allegations of unregistered and under age persons are allowed to vote

in some polling units are high. Similar allegations as Falola & Ihonvbere (1996) observed are contributing factors that led to fall of Nigeria's second republic. The role of technology in democratic development can hardly be doubted. Ranney (2006) submitted that, though the final decision of who becomes United States President reside in the electoral college in the advent of unclear winner in election but still electronic devices and technology as well as political maturity of the American people also aid the conduct of free and fair elections in the country. This maturity, Nigerian people with the aid of technology are heading towards. People through Twitter, Facebook, What Sapp, 2go, etc. already exchange messages of results of votes among themselves without going to assembled in front of electoral offices for votes to be counted and announced before they live. This is part of the reforms that technology introduced in the political culture of Nigeria.

Nigeria in global index is the highest producer and exporter of crude oil on the African continent which as Aderinwale & Olumide (2010) posits are affluence attributes. The problem of leadership and governance which the country is suffering from is born out the political elites' desire to hold tight to power by all means. Access to political power in the country is a perceived avenue to accumulate wealth. This contributes to reason why elections in the country before that of April 2015 were characterized by alleged complains of irregularities on the part of the ruling party. Although this myth, technology is reforming with time especially as can be witnessed in the nation's general elections of April 2015 in which opposition party defeated ruling party in a very margin in elections conducted at all levels.

MATERIALS AND METHOD

This research was conducted with the used of primary and secondary methods of data collection. Secondary data such as text books, journal articles, magazines, newspapers, lecture notes and other print materials form part of the secondary materials used in this research. Primary data was also utilized in the research. The researchers designed and administered close ended questionnaires to one hundred and twenty respondents randomly selected from the six geo-political zones of Nigeria. Each zone was represented by twenty respondents in the research. The questionnaires were administered in the north-eastern town of Maiduguri, north-central town of Jos, north-western town of Kaduna, south-eastern town of Enugu, south-southern town of Port-Harcourt and the south-western town of Ibadan. All the questionnaires were responded to by the respondents in the presence of the researcher who collected them back immediately. The questionnaires were administered by the researcher in the towns stated above at different times. The frequency and percentage statistical tool of analysis were adopted in analyzing primary data collected for the study. It is

also important to note that the symbols adopted in data presentation simply referred to; A=Agreed, SA=Strongly Agreed, U=Undecided, D=Disagreed and SD=Strongly Disagreed.

DISCUSSION

The developmental paste of Nigeria`s democracy was again ascertained with the used of technological device in the 2015 general elections. Card readers and data capturing machines were used in the conduct of the elections. And, these devices tested positive as contributors to the successful conduct of the elections. Unlike previous elections in the country in which technology was not involved in their conducts, 2015 general elections in Nigeria witnessed a tremendous success due to the roles played by the used of card reader and data capturing machines. The 2015 general elections were the first of its kind in the country. Democratic transition was witnessed with the handing over of power to an age long opposition party by ruling party. If not for the use of technology, it was believed by some Nigerians that the elections would have been rigged. Card reader and data capturing machines used in the elections reduced the level of

rigging and manipulation in the elections. Multiple votes by single voter as well as dual or more registration by single voter were solved as a result of the use of technology. Cases of single voter having more than a single voter`s card and voting more than once in a single of more voting polls were tackled by the used of card reader and data capturing machine. Technology which has made the possession and usage of Permanent Voter`s Card (PVC) possible first in the 2015 general elections is a great contribution to the development of democracy promoted by technology. Permanent Voter`s Card (PVC) helped seriously in the area of avoiding multiple voting and duplication of voter`s card in the 2015 general elections. Technology was first conceived preventive measures against rigging and manipulation of election results in 2015 general elections. And, the role played by technology has convinced Nigerians and the country`s electoral body that the need to adopt technology and electronic device in future elections in the country.

Analysis

Below is the analysis of the primary data collected in the study:

Table 1: Technology contributed to the development of democracy in Nigeria`s April 2015 general elections.

S/No.	Variables or Options	Frequency	Percentage
01	Agreed	58	48.33
02	Strongly Agreed	46	38.33
03	Undecided	8	6.67
04	Disagreed	5	5.16
05	Strongly Disagreed	3	2.5
Total	5 Variables or Options	120	100

Source: Authors Field Survey (2020)

Technology according to 48.33% of the respondents involved in this research contributed to the development of democracy in Nigeria`s general elections of April 2015, 38.33% of them strongly

agreed with this view, 6.67% were undecided while 5.16% of them disagreed with the view and only 2.5% of them strongly disagreed with it.

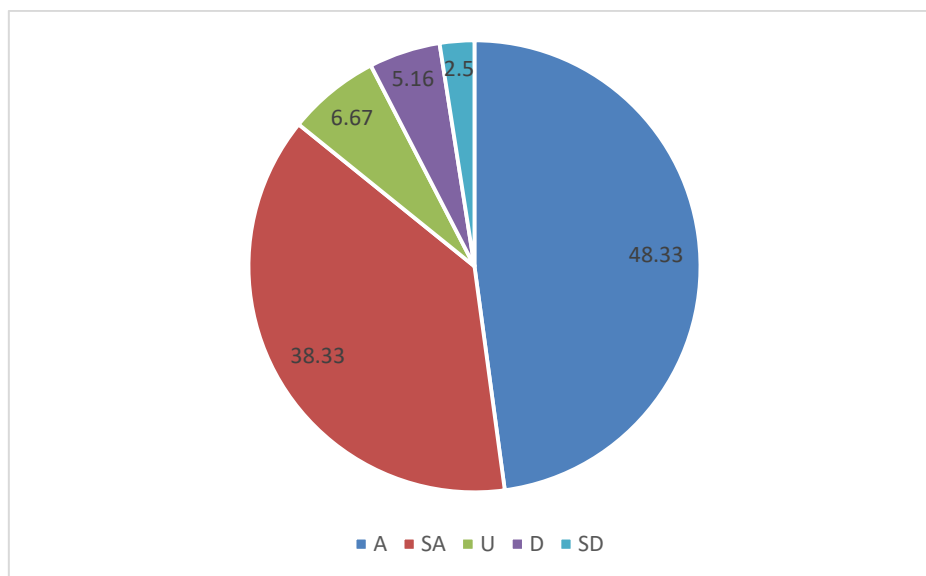


Figure 1. Contribution of Technology to Democratic Development
Source: Authors Field Survey (2020)

Table 2: Card Reader and Data Capturing machines played important roles in Nigeria`s April 2015 general elections.

S/No.	Variables or Options	Frequency	Percentage
01	Agreed	60	50
02	Strongly Agreed	50	41.67
03	Undecided	7	5.83
04	Disagreed	2	1.67
05	Strongly Disagreed	1	0.83
Total	5 Variables or Options	120	100

Source: Authors Field Survey (2020)

Card reader and data capturing machines according to 50% of the respondents played important roles in Nigeria`s April 2015 general elections, 41.67%

of the respondents strongly agreed with this position, 5.83% were undecided, 1.67% disagreed and only 0.83% of them strongly disagreed with the position.

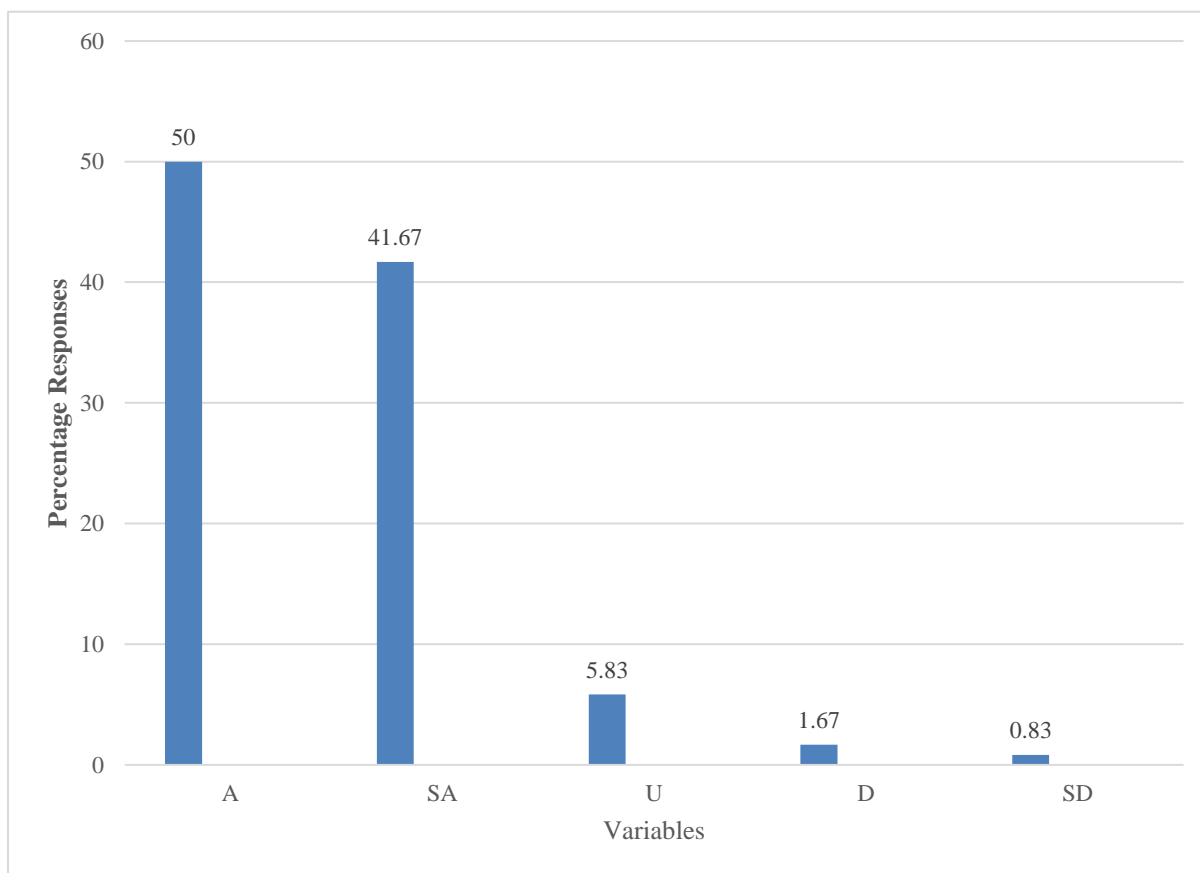


Figure 2. Roles of Card Reader and Data Capturing Machines in Nigeria 2015 General Elections

Source: Authors Field Survey (2020)

Table 3: Technology and electronic devices are preventive measures against rigging in elections.

S/No.	Variables or Options	Frequency	Percentage
01	Agreed	95	79.17
02	Strongly Agreed	10	8.33
03	Undecided	9	7.5
04	Disagreed	5	4.17
05	Strongly Disagreed	1	0.83
Total	5 Variables or Options	120	100

Source: Authors Field Survey (2020)

Table 3 clearly shows that 79.17% of the respondents agreed that the use of technology and electronic devices in elections are preventive measures against rigging, 8.33% of them strongly agreed with this

view, 7.5% of them were undecided about it while 4.17% disagreed with it and only 0.83% of them strongly disagreed with the view.

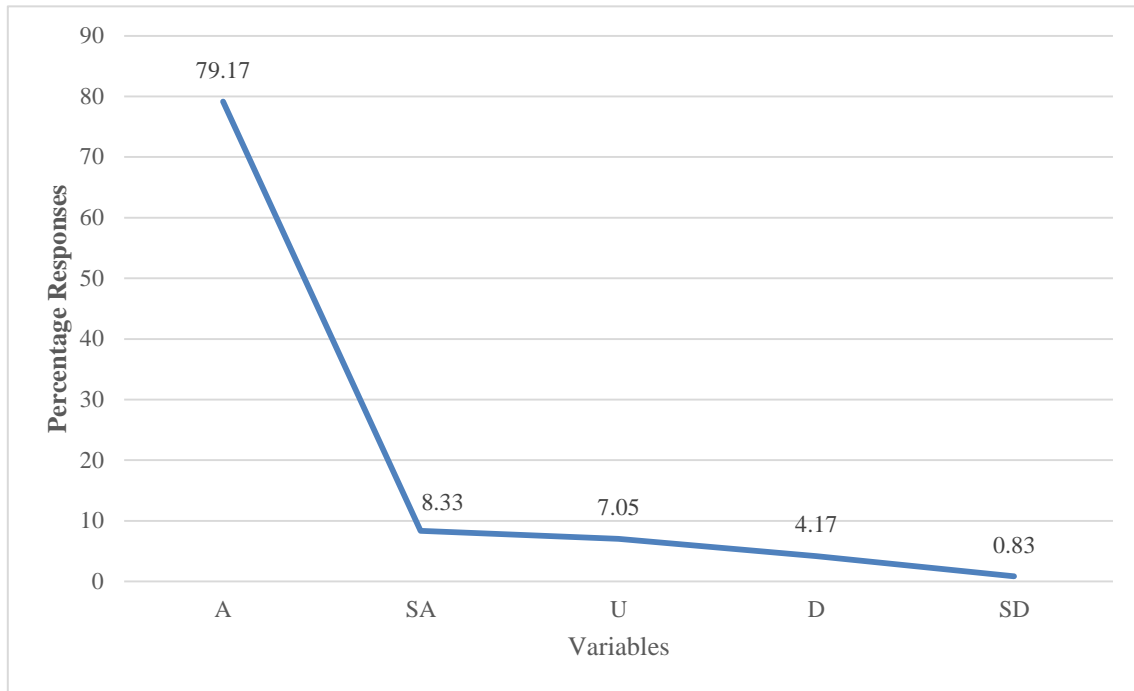


Figure 3. Technological Devices as Preventive Measures against Rigging in Elections
Source: Authors Field Survey (2020)

Table 4: There is need to adopt the use of technology and electronic devices in future elections in Nigeria

S/No.	Variables or Options	Frequency	Percentage
01	Agreed	77	64.17
02	Strongly Agreed	33	27.5
03	Undecided	5	4.16
04	Disagreed	2	1.67
05	Strongly Disagreed	3	2.5
Total	5 Variables or Options	120	100

Source: Authors Field Survey (2020)

In Nigeria's future elections, 64.17% of the respondents agreed that there is the need to adopt the usage of technology and electronic devices, 27.5% of them strongly agreed with the view but 4.16% of them

were undecided and 1.67% of them disagreed with the view while only 2.5% of them strongly disagreed with the view.

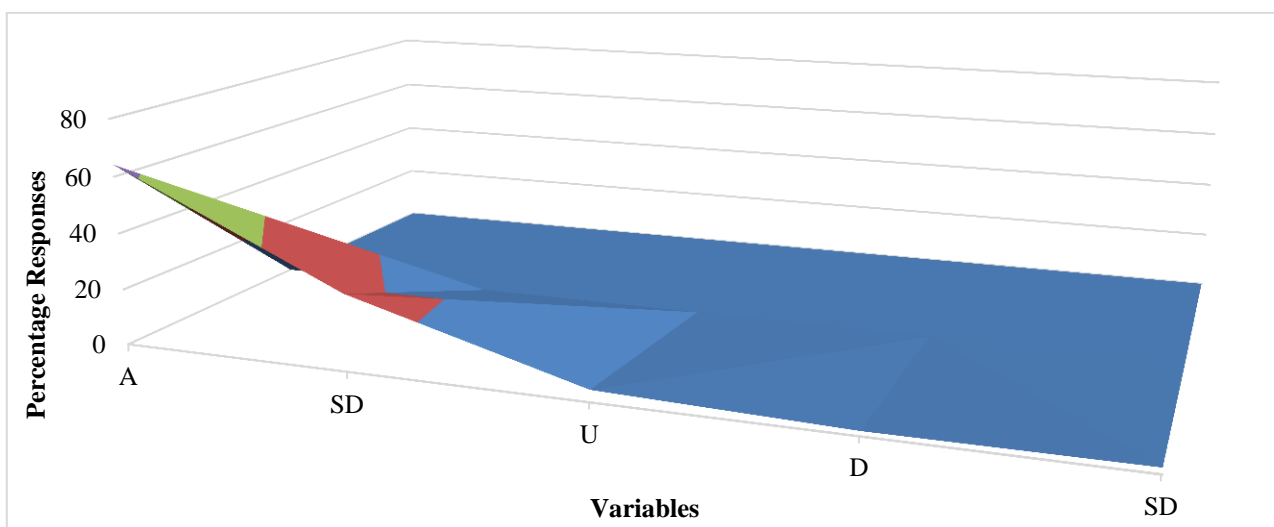


Figure 4. The Need to adopt the use of Technological Devices in Future Elections
Source: Authors Field Survey (2020)

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The developmental paste of Nigeria's democracy was again ascertained with the used of technological device in the 2015 general elections. Card readers and data capturing machines were used in the conduct of the elections. And, these devices tested positive as contributors to the successful conduct of the elections. Unlike previous elections in the country in which technology was not involved in their conducts, 2015 general elections in Nigeria witnessed a tremendous success due to the roles played by the used of card reader and data capturing machines. The 2015 general elections were the first of its kind in the country. Democratic transition was witnessed with the handing over of power to an age long opposition party by ruling party. If not for the use of technology, it was believed by some Nigerians that the elections would have been rigged. Card reader and data capturing machines used in the elections reduced the level of rigging and manipulation in the elections. Multiple vote by single voter as well as dual or more registration by single voter were solved as a result of the use of technology. Cases of single voter having more than a single voter's card and voting more than once in a single of more voting polls were tackled by the used of card reader and data capturing machine. Technology which has made the possession and usage of Permanent Voter's Card (PVC) possible first in the 2015 general elections is a great contribution to the development of democracy promoted by technology. Permanent Voter's Card (PVC) helped seriously in the area of avoiding multiple voting and duplication of voter's card in the 2015 general elections. Technology was first conceived preventive measures against rigging and manipulation of election results in 2015 general elections. And, the role played by technology has convinced Nigerians and the country's electoral body that the need to adopt technology and electronic device in future elections in the country.

FINDINGS

Based on the data analyzed above, the followings are the major findings of the study;

- Technology in no small measure contributed to the development of democracy in Nigeria's April 2015 general elections.
- Card reader and data capturing machines are technology and electronic devices that played important roles in the April 2015 general elections conducted in Nigeria.
- The use of technology and electronic devices guide against rigging in elections.
- There is need to adopt the usage of technology and electronic devices in future elections in Nigeria.

Recommendations

Based on the major findings made and the conclusion reached by this study, the following recommendations are made;

1. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) should work out all necessary modalities required to adopt the usage of technology and electronic devices in future elections in Nigeria.
2. Considering the progress recorded in April 2015 general elections especially in relations to the usage of card reader and data capturing machines, this research recommends that total electronic voting system be adopted in Nigeria.
3. Electoral Officers should be adequately trained on the usage of electronic devices provided for election purpose.
4. And, effective power and energy source for the usage of electronic devices provided for election purposes should be ensured.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this study is that, the use of technology is a precaution against rigging and manipulation of election results in Nigeria. The study also arrived at the conclusion that the use of card reader and data capturing machines played an important role in the country's 2015 general elections. Technology as the study also concluded in no small measure contributes to the development of sustainable democracy in Nigeria and should be adopted in future elections.

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